

Questions Parents Should Ask to Encourage School Equity

1. Children are entitled to have parents, advocates, and concerned educators involved in all decisions affecting their education.
 - Does your child's school communicate with parents in their home language?
 - Does your child's school involve parents from diverse racial and language backgrounds in decision making about how to run the school?
 - Does your child's school work with diverse community groups on school and community events?
 - Does your child's school keep you well-informed about his or her behavior and progress in school?
 - Does our child's school keep you well-informed about school events?
 - Does your child's school hold programs for parents on educational and parenting issues at times and places convenient for parents? Are programs available in different languages and/or translators provided?
 - Does your child's school involve parents in everyday school activities?
2. Children are entitled to integrated and diverse classrooms that support different learning styles and abilities.
 - Does your child's school value all children equally, no matter what their abilities, ethnic background, or socioeconomic status?
 - Does your child's school reflect the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the entire school district?
 - Does your child's school district keep you well informed about school admission and procedures?
 - Does your child's classroom reflect the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic composition of the entire school population?
 - Does your child's school integrate children of all ability levels for instruction?
 - Does your child's school ensure that all students are exposed to high-quality materials and stimulating instruction?
 - Does your child's school utilize a wide variety of teaching methods?
3. Children are entitled to developmentally appropriate and culturally supportive curriculum and teaching strategies offered in languages they can understand.
 - Does your child's school use student's experiences, including those based on culture, race, and language as a resource in developing curriculum?
 - Does your child's school use the various groups in the community as a resource in developing curricula?
 - Does your child's school promote active learning through doing, creating and experimenting?
 - Does your child's school provide English language learners with the opportunity to develop full proficiency in English?
 - Does your child's school provide English language learners with challenging curricula and comprehensible instruction in English and/or the native language within content areas?
 - Does your child's school offer opportunities to learn in two languages?
4. Children are entitled to full access to a common body of knowledge and the opportunity to acquire higher-order skills.
 - Does your child's school encourage students to think about complex problems?
 - Does your child have access to high-quality materials including books, computers and/or primary sources?
 - Does your child's school encourage teachers to experiment and collaborate in creating curriculum and developing teaching strategies?
5. Children are entitled to assessment and grading strategies that enhance individual strengths and potential.

- Does your child's school monitor the progress of your child using different types of assessments?
 - Does your child's school keep you well informed about the purposes and consequences of standardized tests?
 - Does your school make special accommodations in standardized tests to assess students who have special needs? (English language learners, special education students)
 - Does your child's school encourage the use of alternative means of assessment such as student portfolios?
 - Does your child's school use mixed-age grouping to encourage learning across grade lines?
 - Does your child's school minimize the use of grade retention?
6. Children are entitled to support services that address individual needs.
- Does your child's school provide culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible support services to students and families?
 - Does your child's school provide counseling services to children?
 - Does your child have access to specialized services offered in school if needed? (English-as-a-second-language; speech and language therapy; special education teachers: etc.)
 - Do school counselors, English-as-a-second-language teachers and/or other specialists work closely with classroom teachers?
 - Does your child's school collaborate with community organizations to refer students and their families to appropriate outside services?
7. Children are entitled to attend schools that are safe, attractive, and free from prejudice.
- Does your child's school promote respect for children and families of diverse racial, ethnic and language backgrounds?
 - Does your child's school provide equal opportunities for boys and girls of diverse backgrounds?
 - Does your child's school actively condemn discriminatory and intolerant behavior?
8. Children are entitled to attend school unless they pose a danger to other children or school staff.
- Is your child's school a safe place to be?
 - Does your child's school treat all children with fairness?
 - Does your child's school have an orderly and inviting environment?
 - Does your child's school actively encourage good attendance?
9. Children are entitled to instruction by teachers who hold high expectations for all students and who are fully prepared to meet the challenge of diverse classrooms.
- Does your child's school hold high expectations for all its students regardless of ability level and language proficiency?
 - Does your child's school have content teachers who are trained to address the linguistic and cultural needs of diverse student populations?
 - Does your child's school include children with special needs in all curricular and extracurricular activities?
 - Does your child's school develop and implement long-term staff development programs to address a variety of teacher needs?
10. Children are entitled to equal educational opportunity supported by greater resources for schools serving students most vulnerable to school failure.
- Does your child's school keep parents and teachers informed about budgetary and financial issues?
 - Does your child's school have sufficient high-quality educational materials and equipment?
 - Does your child's school offer a range of quality support services?

Source: Adapted by Charo Basterra from *Mobilization for Equity*, published by The National Coalition of Advocates for Students.

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